

1508/1322

# JESUS CHRIST

THE SUPREME HEAD OF HIS CHURCH;

OR,

THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS HAVE REJECTED,

BECOME

THE HEAD OF THE CORNER :

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## A SERMON,

DELIVERED IN

*The New Jerusalem Temple, Birmingham,*

ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCT. 25, 1792-36.

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BY J. PROUD, N.H.M.

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THE HEAD OF THE CORNER

A TESTIMONY

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TO THE READER.

THE following plain discourse was by no means intended for publication. A worthy and much esteemed Member of the New Church wished the Author to employ his thoughts upon the text; in compliance with his desire, the discourse was written and delivered; and by his particular request it is now offered to the candid perusal of serious christians. That the teachers and preachers of the christian church are essentially divided in their sentiments, is too evident to be denied; each one, no doubt, supposes himself right, and that he is building upon the only true and solid foundation.— But if the Lord Jesus Christ be the sole head of the church; if he be the only God of heaven and earth, in his *divine humanity*; then the Author is persuaded that very few, at this day, are making this stone the head of the corner.

His sincere wish is, that Jesus Christ alone may be exalted—that all the builders in the christian church, of every denomination, may know the Lord as the eternal Jehovah, the

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in *one divine person*—that his word of divine truth may be opened to their understandings—that there may be one foundation, one faith, and one church—and that the Lord Jesus Christ alone may reign therein, as King of Kings, and Lord of Lords; the only Saviour, and the only God.

If the following discourse should be in the least conducive to this great end, and a mean of convincing any truly christian mind, that the adorable Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is the only proper object of all faith, love, and obedience, the Author will think his labor well repaid; and most cheerfully unite with his fellow-christians, of every denomination, in ascribing all the praise, glory, and honor to him who sits upon the throne, for ever and ever!



J. P.

Birmingham, Oct. 26, 1792-36.

SERMON



## S E R M O N.

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MATT. xxi. 42.

THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THE SAME IS BECOME THE HEAD OF THE CORNER: THIS IS THE LORD'S DOING, AND IT IS MARVELLOUS IN OUR EYES.

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THE words we have now read, are also written in the Psalms of David, cxviii. 22, 23, from which they are here quoted by the Lord himself; and the apostle Peter, in his first epistle, second chapter, has noticed them again. Hence it is very evident that they are of singular importance to mankind. In speaking from them we shall consider the words as in the order they stand, only dividing them into THREE PARTS:—

*First, The stone which the builders rejected;*

*Second, The same is become the head of the corner;*

*Third, That this is the Lord's doing, and marvellous in the eyes of men.*

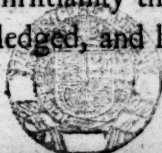
In this first part here are three things to be considered;—first, What we are to understand by this

*stone*?—second, Who are the builders?—third, How they have rejected this stone?

First, It is generally allowed, that the Lord Jesus Christ is meant by THE STONE; and, what is very singular, those persons who reject the Lord, acknowledge him to be the person meant, and at the same time conclude that they by *no means reject him*. But by this stone is not only meant *the Lord as a Saviour*, or as he *appeared among men*; his divine humanity is meant, his divinity, his word of divine truth, &c. as we shall have occasion to notice under the second article (that is to say) WHO ARE THE BUILDERS HERE ALLUDED TO?

By builders are signified all those who are teachers and leaders in the church, who exercise authority and rule, and who are looked up to as guides, on account of their *character, office, and wisdom*. And if we were to trace the state of churches back to ages, prior to the coming of the Lord in the flesh, we should find the builders have rejected *this corner stone*. A few brief remarks may suffice.

The Jews, it is well known, had set aside the commandments of heaven, by their own traditions; instead of the doctrines of truth, they taught the precepts and inventions of men. And although they believed in the coming of the Messiah, yet, when he did come, their minds were so confirmed *in* and darkened *by* their own fables and errors, that they totally rejected the Lord and his truth. In the first ages of christianity the Lord was *received*, his word acknowledged, and his laws obeyed; but  
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in a very little time the builders began to *reject the chief corner stone*:—first, his *sole divinity* was denied, and then the *doctrines of his word*; the rulers and dignitaries of the church usurped authority, assumed the power, and thirsted for divine honors. In order to accomplish their ends, they pulled down the beautiful temple, and erected a *babel* of their own. Where are the builders in our day, who do not reject this chief corner stone? Perhaps there are none who either own they do, or BELIEVE it:—but let us see whether they do or not. First Is the Lord this corner stone, as to *divine truth*? Is not that rejected? Suppose all the doctrines and sentiments now maintained by the christian world, of every denomination, were brought into one view, how many of these doctrines should we find founded upon the pure truth of the bible? I fear but VERY FEW, and those few much *adulterated*. Suppose we say the internal spiritual sense of the holy word is *this stone*, where shall we find that received? Is not that altogether unknown? And when we recommend it, is it not treated with a degree of contempt?

Again, if the Lord Jesus Christ, as to his eternal and sole divinity, be the chief corner stone, is he not rejected by the *builders*? We know that the Lord is not acknowledged as the ONLY GOD in his DIVINE HUMAN. Many own him to be A God, but not THE GOD. Their highest notion is that he is ONE WITH and EQUAL TO the Father; but not that he is the FATHER, the SON, and the HOLY SPIRIT, in *one divine person*. And how many even deny

deny *he is God at all!* say he is no more than *man!* Do not these reject the Lord as the corner stone? But is it not very singular that every one of these builders say they DO NOT reject the Lord. Even the lowest among them will tell you, that their doctrines are founded upon his word; that he is their Saviour, and the head of the church. Would to God their eyes were opened, that they might see their mistake, confess they are wrong, and immediately pull down the babel their imaginations have built! But I do not mean to dwell upon this article; my design is rather to prove that this stone, which the builders have rejected, is *now become the head of the corner.* First, then, the Lord Jesus Christ becomes the chief corner stone and head of his church when he is believed in, acknowledged, and known as the *only God of heaven and earth.* However marvellous this may be in the eyes of men, or however long they may have rejected it, yet this is a *truth*, a *fundamental* and *essential truth*, that the Lord Jesus Christ is *God alone.* Nor can he become *the* chief and sole head of the church, until he is so acknowledged. It is true that men SAY HE IS the head, but in reality he is not, if there be another God called the Father. If there be three persons in the trinity, there are three objects for the church to love, serve, and be governed by; and therefore one of them cannot be the sole head, if each of them are equal. In the primitive days the Lord was the head, the *chief corner stone*; the apostles preached him as such, and as God over all:  
but



but in a little time christians departed from that faith; and ever since they have denied the sole and exclusive divinity of the Lord God the Saviour. The builders, therefore, have rejected him as their only Lord and head. But the time is begun in which the Lord is known, loved, and obeyed as supreme Lord, the alone head of the church, and the eternal Jehovah. He is now the head of the corner—he is exalted above all Gods—and there is no name given under heaven, or among men, whereby we can be saved, but the name of the Lord.

But again, the Lord is become the head of the corner, as to his *divine humanity*. He is God and man in one divine person—the humanity he assumed he *made divine*—he is the Father as to his divine esse, the Son as to his divine humanity, and the Holy Spirit as to his divine operation—*one God in one person*, and THAT in a divine human form. The christian world believe that the Lord Jesus died upon the cross, was laid in the grave, and arose again; but HOW he arose, and with WHAT BODY, they seem, in general, not to understand. It is imagined that after he had appeared some time to his apostles, when he took his leave of them, and appeared to be received by a cloud, that then, by his own divine power, he either dropped the material body, or by some means changed it from material to spiritual; for I presume no one believes that the material body of flesh and blood ascended into heaven.

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We shall not now enter largely into the subject, but only observe, that whatever the Lord received from the virgin mother, he gradually put off, and dispersed, until nothing material or earthly was left; this materiality was all dispersed before his resurrection, and his resurrection body was *spiritual* and *divine*. But christians have generally conceived, that after our Lord's resurrection, he appeared to his disciples in an earthly body, and that they saw him with there bodily eyes—this is a very great mistake. The Lord was never seen by any after his resurrection, except such as had their spiritual sight opened—this is most obvious in several instances. When the apostles were met together, Jesus stood among them, entering into the room when the door was shut, and presently vanishing out of their sight; when, therefore, he chose to appear among them, he opened their spiritual sight; and when he chose to withdraw, he closed that sight: so that the transactions recorded of him, after his resurrection, were spiritually done and not naturally. But as men have not formed a proper idea of what man is, as to his spirit; that he is a proper substantial man, independent of the body—so neither have they conceived that the Lord appeared spiritually to his disciples. However, so it was—he appeared in that spiritual body which he had glorified and made divine, and in which he *now is*; and the Lord, as to his divine humanity, is now become the head of the corner—that humanity possesses all power in heaven and earth—it is the divine human  
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of the deity—and as essentially united therewith as our souls are to their inmost principles; and until Jehovah is acknowledged to be God and man in one divine person, it cannot be said the Lord Jesus is the head of the church. We acknowledge him as such, we worship him as such, and we know of no God save the Lord Jesus in his divine humanity. We behold him therein as the head of the church, because he is THE LIFE thereof—all divine influence flows from him *to* the church—he is the foundation and he is the head, the first and the last, the all in all. As you come to see the Lord in this light, you will not think of three persons distinct one from the other, and thereby be perplexed about which is the head and supreme, but you will see that God *is one—that* God is the Lord Jesus—and that he is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the living and true God.

But again, thirdly, the Lord is become the head of the corner, as to DIVINE TRUTH, the HOLY WORD. The builders have from age to age, either *rejected that word, perverted it, or falsified it*. First, the word of divine truth has only been literally understood; and secondly, that literal sense has been falsified by *human inventions*, by *traditions*; for as men departed from the Lord, who is the God of the word, and the fountain of all wisdom, it is no wonder that they understood not the truth, but falsified it by their own inventions; that this *has been* the case, and *now is*, is too obvious to deny; and it cannot be said that Jesus Christ is the head of the corner,

corner, when his doctrines are rejected and falsified, and the traditions of men are established as the truths of heaven. But now the Lord our God and Saviour will appear in his glory, as the veil is removing from the eyes of mankind, and the pure spiritual sense of divine truth opened. Now it will be seen and known, that the Lord Jesus is the only God in his glorified humanity; the consequence of which will be, that men will look up to him alone for wisdom and direction—the divine influx of love and wisdom will flow into their minds—and by that illumination they will understand the holy word in its true and spiritual meaning. The traditions of men will give way to the doctrines of heaven, and divine truth will be the chief corner stone, the alone foundation of the Lord's church on earth. We say this will be the case, because we know it has already taken place. To many the Lord is *known as the Jehovah*; by many he is *loved, adored, and served*, as the *only God*; and to them the word of truth is now opened. And as there are *many, many thousands*, in the christian world, thirsting for the living water, the pure truth of heaven, so we doubt not but they will most gladly receive it when offered to them, and joyfully acknowledge the Lord as their *head*, their *Saviour*, and their *God*. And as this acknowledgment takes place, the stone which the builders rejected will become the *head of the corner*. Those who rejected his *divinity*, and deemed him a man *only*, shall see him acknowledged as God supreme—those who supposed there were



were a Father, and Holy Spirit in proper persons distinct from him, shall behold that he is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in one divine person—those who set up their own traditions, and maintain false doctrines, shall see *divine truth*, the *pure doctrines* of the bible, triumph over all *error*, *falsehood*, and *darkness*, and enlighten the world with its beams—those who have said they will not have this man to rule over them, shall behold him in his divine humanity, as God over all, and bow the knee at his footstool. Then shall the Lord be the alone head of the church, and all its members shall love, worship, and obey him; to him shall their prayers be directed, to him will they look for every divine blessing; there shall be *one* Jehovah, and his name *one* all over the earth.

Proceed we, thirdly, to observe, according to our text, “This is the *Lord’s doing*, and it is “*marvellous in our eyes.*” First, it is the *Lord’s doing*. You will recollect how many prophecies there are in the holy word, which allude to these great events; and as they are the declarations of God himself, they must and will be accomplished. The Jews opposed the exaltation of Jesus Christ, as the foundation of the christian church; but they could not *prevent* it: with all their opposition to him and his truth, they could but stand astonished at his mighty power and wisdom, and at the success of that truth which he delivered. The work was the Lord’s, and it prospered; and had the christian church continued in his doctrines and truths, as at first,

first, he would have been the chief corner stone to this day. But the love of self, of dominion, and of evil, prevailed in the builders and rulers of the church—they wanted to build such a fabric as would support their own pride, increase their own power, and suit their own propriety; and in such a fabric as this the pure stones of divine truth have no place; much less is Jesus Christ the chief corner stone. This is rather a *babel* than a pure church, and the builders of that babel must assuredly be confounded, when the Lord comes down to see what they have done. The Lord hath promised to restore his Zion, and he will perform—the work is his own, and it will be marvellous in the eyes of millions. To this work the prophet Habakkuk alludes, i. 4, 5, “Therefore the law is slackened, and judgment doth never go forth; for the wicked doth compass about the righteous: therefore wrong judgment proceedeth. Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you.”

Now is the time come for the fulfilment of these words—the Lord Jesus is manifesting himself a second time to the sons of men—he is come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory \*

\* By the CLOUDS OF HEAVEN, are not meant the vapory clouds over our heads; but the literal sense of the holy word, which is as a cloud, or covering, to the internal and spiritual sense: and by POWER and GREAT GLORY, is signified, the internal spiritual sense of the word,

—he is revealing his own divine truth—and appearing in his divine humanity as God over all—the foundation and head of his church—removing the clouds of falshood and error, which have darkened the minds of mankind—and setting up a kingdom which shall stand for ever, and in which he is the sole Ruler and Lord.

These things are marvellous in the eyes of many; although the word declares the fulfilment of them in a multitude of places, yet now they are coming to pass, every one wonders, is astonished, and unwilling to believe the truth of them. It is a work they will not believe, though it be told them. It is marvellous in the eyes of great numbers, that we announce the second advent of the Lord—that we proclaim him as God alone in his divine humanity—that we say his new kingdom is begun—the internal spiritual sense of his word opened—and divine truth manifested in divine light. These are *marvellous things*, but nevertheless they ARE TRUE; and all who at present oppose them, will ere long be convinced that they are so. The stone which the builders have rejected is now become the head of the corner, and it will be marvellous in the eyes of men. It has been so to us—and it is so now to thousands, who, in a little time, will cease to wonder, and learn to admire and adore the Lord Jesus Christ as God over all. When, therefore, the

word, opened and revealed by the Lord at this day.—For a further explanation of which, see E. SWEDENBORG'S Universal Theology, No. 753 to 790.

Lord

Lord Jesus Christ is acknowledged as God alone in his divine humanity, when he is loved with all the heart, and his divine truth is interiorly and spiritually obeyed; then will the stone which the builders rejected become the head of the corner—his church will be glorious, his kingdom stand for ever, and every real member of it will be happy in the Lord. These days are begun, and may divine truth spread from pole to pole, be received and obeyed by all descriptions of men; that the kingdoms of the earth may become the kingdom of the Lord, and that he may reign in it for ever and ever!

Having considered the subject in this *extensive* and *general* point of view, let us now attend to it as INDIVIDUALS. For what applies to a church in general, will also apply to the members of it in particular. As men, and as professing christians, we have all been building upon some foundation or other; and it becomes us to seriously enquire what that foundation is. The stone which the builders in general have rejected, it may be we have rejected also. Has there not been a time in which we did not acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as the alone Jehovah? If there has, we then *so far* rejected the corner stone. Do we now receive him as such? It is a most important enquiry. Is Jesus Christ the only object of *our faith, our love, and our obedience*? I must confess, the time has been when I did not consider him to be God alone, in the full manner I do now; and I esteem



it as the greatest mercy ever communicated to my soul, that I now acknowledge and believe in the Lord Jesus as my only God; as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in one divine person. Is this, then, your faith? If so, you are building upon the right and true foundation, on condition your faith is accompanied with love; and from that love you walk in his commandments. Do you now conceive of the Lord as God and man in one divine person? That he hath glorified his humanity, made it divine, united it with deity, and is accessible, approachable, and visible, in that glorified body? viz. Do you conceive of God as a divine being in a divine human form? For if you do not, you can have no just conceptions of him. He is the *only God*, and he is the *ONLY MAN*; as we are all men by derivation from him. If you view the Lord in this light, you have the object of your faith before you, a centre for your ideas to rest in, and you worship not an unknown deity.

Again, have we not, like other builders, rejected the pure truth and word of the living God? been carried away with the doctrines, traditions, and notions of men? I fear it has been thus with us all.—But are we returned to the chief corner stone, the Lord, as divine truth? His word is now opened in its internal sense—have we acquainted ourselves with it? Are we building upon the fundamental and essential doctrines of it? being convinced, that to love the Lord with all the heart, our neighbour as ourselves, and from those principles to walk in

his commandments, is the sum and substance of all religion? And are we not only convinced of this, but *do we thus love the Lord*? Can we say that he is the one object of our affections, that we delight in goodness and truth, in holiness and true righteousness; that we do love our neighbour as we love ourselves, and conscientiously walk in the laws of the Lord, with freedom, satisfaction, and delight? If so, the Lord is the head of the church in our souls—he is the Alpha and Omega of our religion—he rules in the heart, governs the affections, directs the thoughts, illumines the understanding, and sanctifies our *internal* and *external* life—so that we are, in deed and in truth, *holiness to the Lord*! The stone which *we* have rejected, is become the head of the corner—this is the Lord's doing. It is of his divine mercy that we know him, love him, build upon his truth, and obey his will. It is marvellous in our eyes! We stand astonished at that love, wisdom, and mercy, by which we are thus blessed and made happy!—When we reflect upon our past ignorance, opposition to truth, prejudice in favor of falsehood and error, and confirmation in both darkness and evil, and when we consider the *light*, the *truth*, and *goodness*, now manifested to our understanding, and received in our affections, we can but bow the knee before the Lord in humility, gratitude, and love, and with all the powers of our souls bless and praise his holy name!

See, then, my good friends, that you are of *this* description—that you are the builders in Zion who  
build

build upon the RIGHT foundation—and take care that you build not upon it wood, hay, and stubble, but gold, and silver, and precious stones, viz. *pure goodness, heavenly charity, and genuine truth*; and then you will be growing up into holy temples for the Lord. You build your house, like wise men, upon the rock; and when the rain descends, the floods come, and the winds blow and beat upon it, it will not fall, nor be shaken, but stand for ever. And you will do well to remember, that you are laying a *foundation for eternity!* See, then, that it is one which *will stand*. If you depend upon the Lord, own him as God alone, love him, and keep his laws, you are preparing *for* and laying up treasure *in* the heavenly world. You will recollect that *truth without good, faith without love*, are of no avail; you may see and acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ to be the alone foundation, the chief corner stone, the only God of angels and men; you may believe *in*, and make a profession of his word as *divine truth*, own the Lord in his divine humanity, and consider him as the only object of all religious worship—and at the same time be no nearer the kingdom of heaven, as to your real internal state, than one who knows nothing at all about these things.

It is not knowledge *alone* that will bring us to heaven, or make us happy; but pure love to God and goodness, sound charity, and an obedient life, must be united with our knowledge: then the tree becomes good, the heart is renewed, the will and affections are heavenly, and we become living spiri-  
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tual subjects of the Lord's kingdom. And until this is the state of our minds, we are not building upon a good foundation, nor making the Lord the chief corner stone.

You will consider, then, how far the Lord is become the head of the corner in this respect; how far his love reigns in your will, his truth in your understanding, and *both* in your internal and external life—and so far as they so reign, so far you have received the Lord, and so far you are in a truly good and heavenly state: and if you are so, remember it is the *Lord's doing*, and let it be marvellous in your eyes. That we should become the objects of his love, the subjects of his new kingdom, the heirs of immortality and endless peace, this is *mercy* and *compassion* unspeakable; it calls for *humility*, *gratitude*, and *love*: it demands our utmost thanksgiving and praises. Let us render this willing sacrifice to the Lord our God and Saviour, and so live in all goodness, truth, and righteousness, as to be more worthy of his favor, more useful in life, and better prepared for our eternal state of happiness in his kingdom!



F I N I S.



